DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 960 EC 303 907

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TITLE A Secondary School's Experience: Is It Inclusion, or Is It School Reform?
PUB DATE 9 Dec 94
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (Atlanta, GA, December 7-10, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; *Disabilities; *Educational Change; Educational Philosophy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inclusive Schools; Mainstreaming; Models; School Restructuring

ABSTRACT

This paper questions whether genuine adoption of the inclusive education philosophy can occur within a school setting before it has been tested by the involvement of the whole school in school reform. It sees inclusion as one component of overall school restructuring. Experiences at three schools are compared. At the first school inclusive programming worked well when teachers "agreed" to work together but faltered when more students and teachers were incorporated, due to a general view of inclusion as strictly a "special education reform." The second school participated in the "accelerated schools" model of general education school reform and the third school participated in the "effective schools" model of school reform. In both these initiatives, school reform was seen as benefiting all, with inclusion embedded within the overall process. The infrastructure provided a vehicle in which inclusion of all students could systematically occur. An outline is offered as a means to organize inclusion efforts, focusing on: (1) the goal--full inclusion; (2) the principle--the value of diversity; and (3) objectives (organized around activities in the areas of leadership, simplicity, and patience). (Contains 12 references.) (DB)

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ED 381 960

A Secondary School's Experience: Is It Inclusion, Or Is It School Reform?*

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December 9, 1994

EC 303907

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Abstract

This paper questions if genuine adoption of the inclusive education philosophy can occur at a school setting until it has been tested by the involvement of the whole school -- as School Reform. Also considered are the following points: 1)What is the real question?: Is it inclusion, or is it school reform?; 2)Why ask the question?: Are there issues concerning true adoption of philosophy versus superficial adoption?; and 3)What can we do?: Should there be more "parameters" and guidelines? There are no definitive answers, only situations and assumptions that ensure further research is needed.

A Secondary School's Experience: Is It Inclusion, Or Is It School Reform?

Marcia C. Arceneaux / December 9, 1994

What Is The Real Question?

Is it inclusion, or is it school reform? Lately, this question has become a focus of interest in the evolution of the inclusive process. The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (June, 1994) has stated that there is interest in studying the relationship between inclusion and other education restructuring activities. This author believes there is a correlation between the two, but wonders if the term "other" belongs within the statement. The paper suggest, based on preliminary findings, that inclusion should not be isolated as a type of school restructuring, but viewed as a component of school restructuring. This observation is made due to the fact that many view inclusion as a "special education reform movement", as opposed to a "general education reform movement". This perception seems to be pervasive within schools where there is no general education reform movement, only inclusive education initiatives. When this is the case, true

adoption of the inclusive philosophy seems to be superficial, therefore genuine school reform many not be occurring.

Why Ask The Question?

Are there issues and concerns? Absolutely. Of course there are no simple answers, but perhaps the following will bring the "why should we ask the question" into focus.

Initially, the paper was submitted in an attempt to document a case study of one particular secondary program involved with inclusive education for several years. The pseudonym, School A, will be used. After working with School A, first as a teacher, then as a technical assistant, there was a pattern discovered which the author believes has developed in other schools attempting to incorporate inclusive education.

During the 1993 TASH Conference, a case study of this school was presented. The title was "Inclusion Evolution: A Teacher's Perspective" (Arceneaux, M. 1993). Since this presentation, which documented the process inclusive education had followed at this site over a five year period, an interesting phenomenon has occurred. School A was evolving according to best practice and had

adopted the "full inclusion" philosophy. The school wrote a vision of merging systems; set inclusive student / classroom models moving toward services for all; designed through collaborative action planning a structure of support to include an inclusive team with sub-groups; and developed inservices to provide information, as needed. At this time there was no other general education school reform initiative taking place within the school. As time went on, shifting faculty positions, personality differences between support persons, and differences of opinions left the core of inclusion exposed. What seemed to be evident was this fact: when the inclusive programming was taking place between two consenting teachers who had "agreed" to work together with a limited number of students, the situation was fine. However, the program had now grown to incorporate more students and more teachers. Strong opposition, with legitimate issues and concerns, began to arise. Was the philosophy of inclusion "really" embedded within the school? Did the majority of the faculty really believe in the concept that "all" students can learn? Was it possible that inclusion would simply fold if it came upon enough resistance? Would teachers who

did not want to participate be expected to do so, due to the numbers of students needing support? Were the inservices, the model, and the infra-structure strong enough to withstand the criticism and unrest? Was there enough support at the district level? These were unsettling questions, to say the least.

In the course of these events, the author as a technical assistant, began to work with, observe and interview different school sites in various districts where inclusive education was developing. Also, the literature on general education school reform, comprehensive school reform (Skrtic & Sailor, 1992), and Goals 2000 was diligently read. Of special interest was School B, a school participating in the "Accelerated Schools" general education school reform program. Another, School C, participated in the "Effective Schools" model of school reform. The underlying theme for these school initiatives is the "core" belief that reform is for the whole school -- to benefit <u>all</u>. Yet, its core seemed to be deeply rooted within the general education population, with the embedding of inclusion as a natural process of evolvement. The structure within each school was broad-based, with the involvement of

administration, faculty and staff, families, students, and the community. The infra-structure consisted of a team with cadres or sub-committees, selected by the participants, to handle all areas of school reform, inclusion being one part. Typically, inclusion was not listed as a cadre, but embedded in such sub-committees as "Child Development". Much training and many meetings were held to prepare the schools for the reform or restructuring movement. Again, the main focus of all of this infra-structure was not inclusion, but reform of the whole school. The infra-structure provided a "vehicle" for inclusion of all students to systematically occur. Did this mean there were no problems. Absolutely not! In fact, the issues and concerns were basically the same as School A, but the system provides a vehicle that was embedded in general education. In all honesty, as diligently as School A had worked for a merging approach of regular and special education, inclusion seemed to be accepted only at a superficial level. Under examination, the movement was viewed as "special education reform". Using broad forms of data collection, inclusion is seen more as a general education reform movement in School B and School C. Further formal research will be

forthcoming.

As a side note, School A has decided to continue to work toward inclusion, but has placed the inclusion team, along with other committees, under the umbrella of the school building level committee. Also, School A is re-working the school handbook to summarize current programming and future plans with the hope of "pulling the school together". The quality of inclusive programming remains within their ability to desire the change and to work toward the goal. Also, in reporting this information, it is important to note this superficial adoption at School A did not become apparent until years of inclusive programs had been in operation. The philosophy had not been truly tested to determine if it would hold up under pressure until inclusion had grown to incorporate the whole school, not just the teachers who were interested and were willing to work with a limited number of students.

What Can We Do?

From the previous discussion, the argument could be presented that to have genuine inclusion within a school, a formal general reform movement should be in place. The

author is not prepared to make this statement. Further research is needed. However, whether a general education school reform movement is needed or not, one point still remains. Across many school sites, including those with and without school reform initiatives, there is difficulty in "defining" inclusion. This difficulty is not merely an issue for the sole purpose of definition, but also affects the setting of "parameters for operation". At this point, after teaching within a special school, teaching in an inclusive school, working with various school sites, and acquiring information through literature, the author has become aware of the need for "parameters" to help in the incorporation of inclusion. The following outline was designed for personal benefit. There is so much excellent information available, there was a need to organize the "information" and the "process" within a workable scope. The following is offered as such a tool -- 1)Goal - Where are we going?; 2)Principle - What is the foundation?; and 3)Objectives - How are we going to get there? This is not intended as a "cook book" approach by any means, but as a "space" to categorize the enormous amount of

information and emerging data focusing on inclusion and school reform (See Appendix B for Brief Overview).

Overview of Parameters

I. Goal: Full Inclusion

II. Principle: Value Diversity

III. Objectives:

A. Leadership

*School Reform

*Instruct the Instructors

*Pre-Service

B. Simplicity

*Systematic Implementation

*Instruction Components

C. Patience

*Change Process

*Assess > Evaluate

Discussion of Parameters

I. Goal: Full Inclusion

The term itself is illusive, at best. Many are calling it the "I" word, or refusing to use it at all. Others have referred to the term as "intrusion", a term that is insulting not only to the individuals attempting to implement inclusion, but more importantly, to the students involved. So, why the term Full Inclusion? Within this paper, the term is used as a goal, not for education exclusively, but for society at large. Embedded within the definitions of the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (1994), and the Louisiana Coalition for Inclusive Education (1992), the issue of society is a stated outcome. Therefore, when referring to the big picture, the author does not find full inclusion problematic, but rather applicable to a desirable outcome (See Appendix A for definitions).

II. Principle: Diversity and Respect for the Individual

The principle of diversity has come under attack lately from various groups. The question brought to light is as follows: Can public education truly provide the best possible education to all students within the

setting of one general education system? The author believes this to be absolutely true. However, a qualifier is needed. This is true when it is done in an appropriate manner, with a focus on all individual students. Points to consider are the number of students within a heterogeneous class setting (teacher/pupil ratio), the expertise of the teacher and support staff, the quality of curriculum and strategies, and the support of the school, district, families and community. In many areas of the nation, this would include restructuring of regulations and funding mechanisms within the system, or systemic change.

III. Objectives: How can we get there?

A. Objective: Leadership This seems like such a simple concept, yet in the world of collaboration and teaming, at times this issue becomes clouded. While conducting qualitative research, several teaming opportunities were observed over a period of time. The teams had received literature based instruction on the "how's" of collaboration and teaming, but interesting data was noted. For example, one team had a "dominator" who made

all the decisions, another had a "leader", but no plan of action would develop. With others, there was no leadership, therefore there were no issues or resolutions. However, while observing other situations where teaming was in action, true leadership led to conflict resolutions and movement. Possibly, leadership skills should be incorporated as an important component within inclusion. The importance of leadership is not evident only within the school and district levels. "State Departments of Education will find that they too can best promote heterogeneous schools as part of a larger reform venture; supporting the reinventing of schools for the very high performance of all students" (adapted from Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainback, 1992).

1. School Reform

This brings into focus school reform. A study of several school reform initiatives indicates a definite leadership component within training. Some may spend as much as one year training leadership, not in domination and dictatorship, but how to facilitate change from an appropriate position. Also within certain school reform

initiatives such as "Accelerated Schools" and "Effective Schools" models, the goals and objectives are clear and precise, preparing for management from a site-based approach which allows for flexibility, yet stability. Another point to consider is the impact of Goals 2000. As Kay Lambert states "that train is leaving the station - we had better be on it" (1994). This is an invitation that is not to be addressed lightly.

2. Instruct the Instructors

Such terminology has been used and abused throughout the evolvement of change. Yet in the case of inclusion, there is concern about the training of individuals to support the effort. Many times the approach is well intentioned, but just does not do the job. Or, a team of individuals may be "trained" initially, but without a true goal or clear picture of where they are moving. Again, no one is advocating for a "cook book" approach. But there could be more information generated concerning the logistics of the "goal" and "guidelines" on how to get there. If not, what may happen can be referred to as the "Emperor's New Clothes" effect. Some seem to see the projected outcome and possible ways to advance forward,

but in reality this in not the case and avoidable mistakes can be made.

3. Pre-Service

The literature clearly indicates the need for pre-service training within university settings. Teachers and administrators are continually bringing this forth as an issue, and a valid one. How can such a broad change take place until teachers are "taught" and "certified" in the type of education proposed by inclusion and school reform? Although there is a need for teacher training programs nation-wide, locally many universities are beginning to incorporate inclusive education philosophies and studies into existing curriculum. The "bottom-up approach" is obvious here.

B. Objective: Simplicity Since the 1980's, there has been much information disseminated on inclusion. So much and so dynamic, in some areas the implementation process has become overwhelming. "Where do we begin?"; "How can we incorporate the whole school, not just students with severe disabilities?"; and "What happens to special education" are all common questions deserving reasonable

responses. Again, in an attempt to organize for both a personal and a professional working scope, these "Phases" are presented as a tool, not "have to do's". These are based on a review of the literature and experience.

1. Systematic Implementation:

Phase I: The Integration Stage

Many circumstances that districts and schools find themselves in could be interpreted as the integration stage. An example of this stage could occur when a student or class of students are moved from a segregated facility to their neighborhood school for the first time. Much preparation is needed. Of course, the perfect scenario of best practice would incorporate every indicator of inclusive education from day one, but reality has proven differently for many schools. Phase I is a short term "starting place", with definitive goals progressing from integration to inclusion. A valid point for neighborhood schools is mentioned here. Without this concept in place, the high ratio of students with disabilities could make heterogeneous general education classes difficult, if not impossible to support.

Phase II: Inclusive Education

Quality indicator checklist based on best practice published in the literature could be utilized to evaluate the inclusive component of the school. Many indicators look at neighborhood schools; the non-existence of self-contained special education classrooms; inclusion teams and infra-structure; models of inclusive programming - such as co-teaching or support staff; and, students as true members of age-appropriate classes. If a general education school reform movement is already in place, this stage or component would fit within one of the school's ongoing cadres or subcommittees. This phase may begin (or over-lap with Phase I) with the inclusion of one student with an action plan to move forward to incorporate all students under the umbrella of inclusive programming and school reform. As inclusion evolves, many trainings and inservices should be provided to all involved. The goal of Phase II is to systematically include all students within heterogeneous general education classes with appropriate support, modifications, and/or adaptations. According to the Institute on Inclusive Education (Minnesota), this does not mean that the student must spend 100% of

instructional time within a general education classroom and that 1:1 instruction never occurs. However, integrated settings for learning are provided for all students. This takes much collaboration and teaming from all involved. Rainforth, York, and Macdonald (1992) have defined collaboration as a process of problem solving by team members...having equal status. Without this approach, chaos or dumping of students with IEPs into general education classes can occur.

Phase III: General Education Heterogeneous Classes

There are several avenues to take when approaching this phase. Some begin moving from Phase I to Phase II and then naturally restructuring support to form Phase III. Others have taken a systematic approach of beginning with one pilot site within the district, typically the elementary level. Students within the non-categorical pre-school programs attend their neighborhood child-care facilities, while five year old students attend the typical kindergarten within the neighborhood school. The following year, after inservices and collaboration, there is a systematic attempt to include these children into first grade. Obviously, as the

children progress, there is a natural advancement of inclusive programming from grade level to grade level. This approach has been successful, especially where there is general education school reform. This progression may seem "simple", but it is not easy.

2. Instruction Components:

Due to the amount of information exploding within the literature concerning reforming education using approaches such as collaboration, different levels of instruction, modifications, adaptations, cooperative learning, whole language, integrated learning, portfolio assessments, and peer support, resources should be made available to school sites concerning these topics and others on how they fit into the natural order of inclusion and school reform. For example, a resource file library that contains information on specific topics, could be made available to schools. This information could be utilized for one hour presentations to faculties and others or for general reading material.

C. Objective: Patience

This seemed like such an unlikely term for an objective, but it is crucial and cannot be over-emphasized. The utilization of patience is critical to the success of inclusion and school reform. Patience is defined in Webster's New World Dictionary as "steadiness, endurance, or perseverance in performing a task". These words are at the core of the implementation of inclusion and school reform. There is always the urge to "just do it", and at times this may be the only alternative. But in the vast majority of cases, patience and precise planning are keys to success.

1. Change Process:

Fullan (1992) states, "Change is a process, not an event". In a simplified overview, Fullan describes the change process as 1)Initiation, 2)Implementation, 3)Continuation, and 4)Outcome. Although simplified, these steps of action are essential in maintaining a strong effort.

2. Assess > Evaluate:

Embedded within the concept of patience is the need to assess and evaluate on an annual basis. If there is no formal technical assistance occurring within a school setting, a simple quality indicator checklist, either designed by the school or published, could be used on a regular basis to assess where strengths and weaknesses are located. Also, simple questionnaires to identify these points can be used, as well as other formal and informal data collection procedures. There must be this type of input to plan for the future. The importance of assessing and evaluating the school as a whole, not only the components of inclusion, should be a priority.

Summary

The paper questions if genuine adoption of the inclusive philosophy can occur at a school setting until it has been tested by the involvement of the whole school as school reform. There is no definitive answer to this question, only situations and assumptions to consider. Certainly, much more research is needed in this area.

The related topics are listed as follows: 1)What is the real question?: Is it inclusion, or is it school reform?; 2)Why ask the question?: Are there issues

concerning true adoption of the philosophy of inclusion versus superficial adoption; and 3)What can we do?: Should there be more "parameters" or process guidelines for inclusion? Again, there are no definitive answers. But the author believes strongly in the correlation between general education school reform and the "vehicle" it can provide for genuine adoption of the inclusive philosophy as part of the whole school, rather than as a "special education reform movement". Superficial adoption of philosophy will be problematic. Genuine adoption of philosophy will provide full inclusion for all as valued members of society.

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APPENDIX A

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION DEFINED NATIONALLY

"Providing to all students,

including those students with severe disabilities,

equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services,

with the needed supplementary aids and support services,

in age-appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools,

in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society."

NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATIONAL RESTRUCTURING AND INCLUSION (1994)

A product of: Louisiana Statewide Systems Change Project for Inclusive Education
August 1994 (3rd draft)

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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION DEFINED LOCALLY

"Inclusive education is

the education of all students

in regular education and community settings

to ensure full and valued membership in society."

Louisiana Coalition for Inclusive Education, 1992

A product of: Louisiana Statewide Systems Change Project for Inclusive Education

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APPENDIX B

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Goal: FULL INCLUSION

Principle: VALUE DIVERSITY

Objective: LEADERSHIP

- School Reform
- Training
- Pre-Service

Objective: SIMPLICITY

- Systematic Implementation
- Information Components

Objective: PATIENCE

- Change Process
- Assess → Evaluate

Arceneaux, M. (1994)